

April 18, 2005

Dear Governor Blagojevich and Members of the Illinois General Assembly,

In accordance with the Illinois Early Learning Council Act, we are pleased to submit the first report describing the Illinois Early Learning Council's accomplishments. By approving legislation in the Spring of 2003 that created the Illinois Early Learning Council, you took a major step toward establishing a high-quality statewide early childhood service system to respond to the needs of Illinois' families with young children.

The Illinois Early Learning Council, which is comprised of gubernatorial and legislative appointees representing a broad range of constituencies, is committed to ensuring that all Illinois children are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time they enter school. Through collaborative efforts to coordinate, improve and expand upon existing early childhood programs and services, the Council's is working to meet the early learning needs of all children from birth to age five and their families.

High-quality early learning experiences have been proven to better prepare all children for success in school and later in life. Yet, more than one-third of Illinois kindergartners are not considered ready to learn when they arrive at school. The Council has worked over the past year to develop a plan to establish a voluntary universal "Preschool For All" initiative to ensure that Illinois children under age five have access to high-quality early learning opportunities aimed at helping them thrive today and succeed tomorrow.

Helping all children start school ready to learn is critical to their future success and to the well-being of society as a whole. We look forward to sharing our Preschool For All recommendations with you in the near future, and to actively working with you to build a strong early learning system available to all.

Sincerely,

Elliot Regenstein, Co-Chair  
Director of Education Reform  
Office of the Governor

Harriet Meyer, Co-Chair  
President  
Ounce of Prevention Fund

# Illinois Early Learning Council



## 2004-2005 Annual Report



<p><b>Illinois Early Learning Council</b> <b>2004-2005 Annual Report</b></p>
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# Illinois Early Learning Council

## BACKGROUND

The State of Illinois supports many early learning programs for children from birth to age five and their families. Governor Rod Blagojevich and members of the General Assembly took a major step toward establishing a statewide high-quality early childhood system by approving Senate Bill 565 in the Spring of 2003, which created the Illinois Early Learning Council. The Council is comprised of 47 gubernatorial and legislative appointees representing a broad range of constituencies, including schools, child care centers and homes, Head Start, higher education, state, local, and federal government agencies, the General Assembly, business, law enforcement, foundations, and parents. The Council is co-chaired by Elliot Regenstein, Director of Education Reform in the Office of the Governor and Harriet Meyer, President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund.

## VISION

The Illinois Early Learning Council is committed to ensuring that all Illinois children are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time they enter school. The Council's goal is to meet the early learning needs of all children from birth to age five and their families by establishing a high-quality, accessible, and comprehensive statewide early learning system. The Council guides collaborative efforts to coordinate, improve and expand upon existing early childhood programs and services, including making use of existing reports, research, and planning efforts.

## BROAD PURPOSES

- To review recommendations of previous and ongoing early childhood efforts and initiatives and oversee implementation
- To develop multi-year plans to expand programs and services to address gaps and insufficient capacity and to ensure quality
- To reduce or eliminate policy, regulatory and funding barriers
- To engage in collaborative planning, coordination and linkages across programs, divisions and agencies at the state level

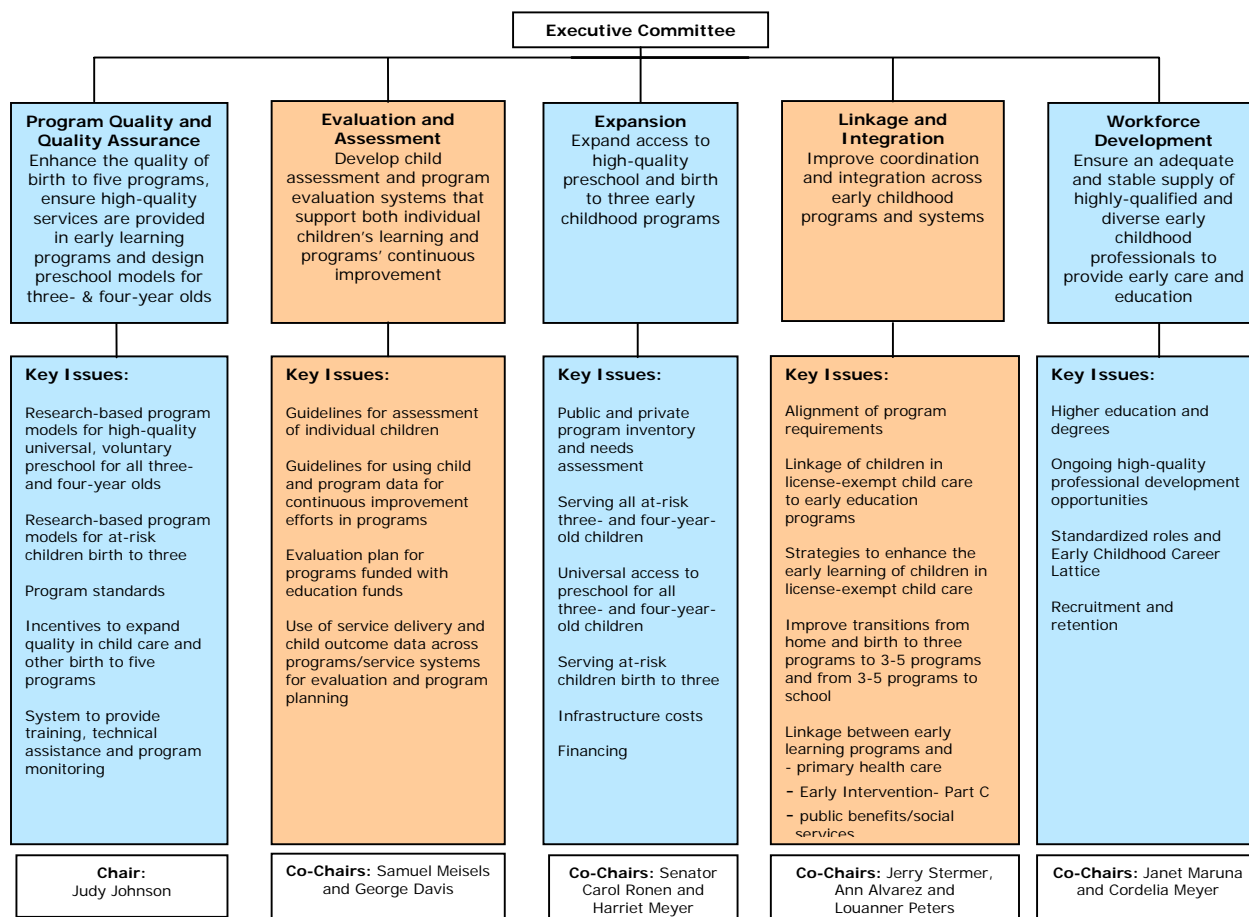
## MEMBERSHIP

Council members serve on a voluntary, unpaid basis; represent both public and private organizations; and reflect the regional, cultural, and racial diversity of Illinois. Members serve three-year terms, except for the initial appointments; half of the initial members are appointed to a two-year term so that terms are staggered. The President of the Senate, Minority Leader of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives each appoint one member to the Council. All other Council members are appointed by the Governor. A full list of Illinois Early Learning Council members is included in Appendix A.

## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Based on recommendations of Illinois' past and ongoing early childhood initiatives, the Illinois Early Learning Council decided to approach its work through five committees, whose overarching goals and issue areas are described in the following chart.

**Illinois Early Learning Council**  
**Co-Chairs: Elliot Regenstein, Office of the Governor**  
**Harriet Meyer, Ounce of Prevention Fund**



Five meetings of the full Council were convened in 2004. A list of Council and Committee meeting dates is included in Appendix B. Each of the Council's five committees - Program Quality and Quality Assurance, Evaluation and Assessment, Expansion, Linkage and Integration, and Workforce Development - is comprised of Council members as well as additional early childhood stakeholders, and each committee is co-chaired by Council members from both the public and private sectors. The Council's Executive Committee is comprised of committee chairs and a several at-large members. The Executive Committee develops Council meeting agendas, moves decisions of the Council forward, and coordinates work between committees.

## **2004-2005 PRIORITIES**

The Council reviewed existing reports, research, and planning efforts in order to guide its efforts. Key recommendations and priorities, related to families with children under five that were identified through the following initiatives, provided a foundation for the Council's work: Illinois Preschool Task Force Report, Illinois Child Care Strategic Plan, Illinois Children's Mental Health Task Force, Professional Development Advisory Committee, Born Learning, Chicago Partners for Children, the License-Exempt Home Child Care Conference and the Birth to Five Project (also known as the Build Initiative).

The Illinois Early Learning Council chose to develop a comprehensive plan for Preschool For All as its highest priority based on Governor Blagojevich's commitment to voluntary access to high-quality early education services for all young children whose parents choose to participate, past planning efforts, and the Council's commitment to ensure that all Illinois children are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time they enter school. Although it's been proven that participation in high-quality early learning experiences better prepare children for success in school and later in life, more than one-third of Illinois kindergartners are not considered ready to learn when they arrive at school. A voluntary Preschool For All program would expand access to high-quality preschool for all children age three to five and to high-quality early learning programs for infants and toddlers at greatest risk of later school failure.

The Preschool For All plan addresses several interrelated goals of the Council, including:

1. enhancing the quality early learning programs for children age birth to three and three to five that include quality assurance and evaluation
2. expanding both access to and the quality of early learning programs
3. linking programs to others serving families with young children
4. developing the early childhood workforce to ensure an adequate, stable supply of highly-qualified and diverse individuals to staff early learning programs

In July of 2004, the Council approved a set of Essential Elements to guide the development of its recommendations for Preschool For All (see Appendix C). In addition, recognizing that the family - defined as those persons responsible for day-to-day care and nurturing - is the primary influence on a child, the Illinois Early Learning Council incorporated into its goals and objectives family involvement practices suggested by the National Standards for Parent and Family Involvement Programs. These address the importance of respecting family culture, diversity and language.

The Council's Preschool For All recommendations will be delivered to Governor Blagojevich and members of the General Assembly during 2005.



## APPENDIX A: ILLINOIS EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Carol Adams  
Secretary  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services*

Ellen Alberding  
President  
*The Joyce Foundation*

Guy Alongi  
Chair  
*Illinois Community College  
Board*

Ann Alvarez  
President & CEO  
*Casa Central*

Martha Arntson  
Executive Director  
*Childcare Network of  
Evanston*

Lori Ann Baas  
Executive Director  
*Christopher House*

Gayla Boomer  
President  
*Illinois Congress of Parents  
and Teachers*

Constance Brown  
Principal  
*Urbana School District 116*

Mary Ellen Caron  
Commissioner  
*Chicago Department of  
Children & Youth Services*

Martina Casey  
Family Child Care Provider  
*Service Employees  
International Union*

The Honorable Elizabeth  
Coulson  
State Representative  
*Illinois General Assembly*

George Davis  
Executive Director  
*City of Rockford Human  
Services Department*

Mark Donahue  
President  
*Fraternal Order of Police,  
Chicago Lodge 7*

Arne Duncan  
CEO  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Claudia Fabian  
Outreach Specialist  
*Latino Coalition for Prevention*

Marilu Galan  
Parent  
*Family Focus*

Phyllis Glink  
Program Director  
*Irving Harris Foundation*

The Honorable Deborah  
Graham  
State Representative  
*Illinois General Assembly*

Vinni Hall  
Board Member  
*Illinois State Board of  
Education*

The Honorable Don Harmon  
State Senator  
*Illinois General Assembly*

Judy Johnson  
Consultant  
*Rockford Public Schools,  
Dennis Early Education  
Center*

Richard Jones  
President and CEO  
*Metropolitan Family Services*

James Kaplan  
Chair  
*Illinois Board of Higher  
Education*

Lanita Koster  
Education Issues Director  
*Illinois Federation of Teachers*

Trinita Logue  
President  
*Illinois Facilities Fund*

Barry Maram  
Director  
*Illinois Department of Public  
Aid*

Janet Maruna  
Executive Director  
*Illinois Network of Child Care  
Resource & Referral  
Agencies*

Samuel J. Meisels  
President  
*Erikson Institute*

Cordelia Meyer  
Vice-President  
*Civic Committee of the  
Commercial Club of Chicago*

Harriet Meyer (Co-Chair)  
President  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Janice Moenster  
Professional Development  
Advisor  
*Children's Home and Aid  
Society of Illinois*

Carolyn Newberry Schwartz  
*The Oak Park Collaboration  
for Early Childhood Care and  
Education*

Wanda Newell  
Education Program Director  
*Robert R. McCormick Tribune  
Foundation*

Louanner Peters  
Deputy Chief of Staff for  
Social Services  
*Office of the Governor*

Claudia Quigg  
Executive Director  
*Baby TALK*

Elliot Regenstein (Co-Chair)  
Director of Education Reform  
*Office of the Governor*

The Honorable Carol Ronen  
State Senator  
*Illinois General Assembly*

Bryan Samuels  
Director  
*Illinois Department of Children  
& Family Services*

Adele Simmons  
Vice Chairman and  
Senior Executive  
*Chicago Metropolitan 2020*

Leo Smith  
Director  
*Illinois Birth to Five Political  
Action Committee*

Luz Maria Solis  
Executive Director  
*Chicago Public Schools -  
Early Childhood Professional  
Development*

Jerry Stermer  
President  
*Voices for Illinois Children*

Joyce A. Thomas  
Regional Administrator  
*U.S. Department of Health &  
Human Services -  
Administration for Children  
and Families*

Judith Walker Kendrick  
Director  
*Chicago Coalition of Site-  
Administered Child Care  
Programs*

Maria Whelan  
President & CEO  
*Action for Children*

Eric Whitaker  
Director  
*Illinois Department of Public  
Health*

## **Linkage & Integration Committee**

Scott Allen  
*IL Chapter of the American  
Academy of Pediatrics*

Ann Alvarez (Co-Chair)  
*Casa Central*

Jill Andrews  
*Kiddie Kollege*

Z. Clara Brennan  
*St. Augustine College*

Sandy Burke  
*Peoria Citizens Committee for  
Economic Opportunity*

Martina Casey  
*Service Employees International  
Union*

The Honorable Elizabeth  
Coulson  
*Illinois General Assembly*

Rick Estrada  
*Erie Neighborhood House*

Jan Fowler  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services – Office of  
Community Health &  
Prevention*

Robyn Gabel  
*Illinois Maternal and Child Health  
Coalition*

Elizabeth Gastelum  
*Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Commission*

Linda Gilkerson  
*Erikson Institute*

Phyllis Glink  
*Harris Foundation*

The Honorable Deborah  
Graham  
*Illinois General Assembly*

Janet Gully  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services – Bureau of Early  
Intervention*

Yolanda Harris  
*Chicago State University*

Kay Henderson  
*Illinois State Board of Education  
– Early Childhood Education*

Andrea Ingram  
*Illinois Department of Children &  
Family Services*

Charles Jackson  
*Illinois Department of Public  
Health*

Colleen Jones  
*Metropolitan Family Services*

Gwendolyn Kenner-Johnson  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services – Office of Child Care &  
Family Services*

Melissa Lane  
*Child & Family Connections*

Terri Lawrence  
*Tri-County Opportunities Council*

Kenneth Leek  
*Vermilion County Health  
Department*

Dan Lesser  
*Sargent Shriver National Center  
on Poverty Law*

Lynn Liston  
*Rockford Memorial Hospital,  
Department of Child  
Development & Behavior*

Lori Longueville  
*Child Care Resource & Referral –  
John A. Logan College*

Maury Lyon  
*L.T. Stone School*

Paulette Mercurius  
*Chicago Department of Children  
& Youth Services*

Cheryl Morgan  
*Chicago Department of  
Children & Youth Services*

Anne Marie Murphy  
*Illinois Department of Public Aid*

Louanner Peters (Co-Chair)  
*Office of the Governor*

Pam Reising Rechnert  
*Illinois State Board of Education  
– Early Childhood Education*

Nancy Ronquillo  
*Children's Home Aid Society*

Andrea Sass  
*Young Women's Christian  
Association of Metropolitan  
Chicago*

Steve Saunders  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services – Office of Family  
Health*

Adele Simmons  
*Chicago Metropolitan 2020*

Sara Slaughter  
*Chicago Metropolitan 2020*

Jerry Stermer (Co-Chair)  
*Voices for Illinois Children*

Sandra Taenzer  
*Schaumburg School District 54*

Judith Walker-Kendrick  
*Chicago Coalition of Site  
Administered Child Care  
Programs*

Maria Whelan  
*Action for Children*

Ron Whitmore  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Kay Wilmoth  
*U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services'  
Administration for Children &  
Families – Region V*

## **Workforce Development Committee**

Roseanna Ander  
*The Joyce Foundation*

Martha Arntson  
*Childcare Network of  
Evanston*

Nya Berry  
*Lutheran Family Mission*

Karen Bruning  
*Illinois Network of Child Care  
Resource & Referral  
Agencies*

Leon Denton  
*Salvation Army*

Jana Fleming  
*City Colleges of Chicago*

Susan Fowler  
*University of Illinois –  
Urbana – Champaign*

Marilu Galan  
*Family Focus*

Marsha Hawley  
*Kendall College*

Raydeane James  
*Illinois State of Education –  
Early Childhood Education*

Benjamin J. Kendrick  
*Marcy-Newberry Association*

Portia Kennel  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Holly Knicker  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services – Bureau of Child  
Care & Development*

Brenda Klostermann  
*Illinois Education Research  
Council*

Lanita Koster  
*Illinois Federation of Teachers*

Maggie Laslo  
*SEUI Local 880*

Janet Maruna (Co-Chair)  
*Illinois Network of Child Care  
Resource & Referral  
Agencies*

Cordelia Meyer (Co-Chair)  
*Civic Committee of the  
Commercial Club of Chicago*

Wendy Mertes  
*William Rainey Harper  
College*

Mary Monroe-White  
*Lincoln Land Community  
College*

Cynthia Moreno  
*Illinois Department of Children  
& Family Services*

Wanda Newell  
*Robert R. McCormick Tribune  
Foundation*

Elaine Parker  
*Chicago Department of  
Children & Youth Services*

Kathy Penak  
*U.S. Department of Health &  
Human Services -  
Administration for Children  
and Families*

Claudia Quigg  
*Baby TALK*

Ms. Dianne Rothenberg  
*University of Illinois – Urbana-  
Champaign*

Sara Starbuck  
*Illinois Network of Child Care  
Resource & Referral  
Agencies*

Ms. Diane Stout  
*Circles of Learning*

Teri Talan  
*McCormick Tribune Center for  
Early Childhood Leadership  
National Louis University*

Blanca Trevino  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Burma Weekley  
*Marcy-Newberry Association*

Jean Wolf  
*Western Illinois University*

Cass Wolfe  
*Carole Robertson Center for Learning*

## **Expansion Committee**

Lori Ann Baas  
*Christopher House*

Angela Ball  
*Chicago Department of Children & Youth Services*

Jill Bradley  
*Carole Robertson Center for Learning*

Connie Brown  
*Urbana School District 116*

Tim Carpenter  
*Fight Crime Invest in Kids Illinois*

Dorothy Cole-Gary  
*North Lawndale Young Men's Christian Association*

Paula Cottone  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Mark Donahue  
*Fraternal Order of Police, Chicago Lodge 7*

Clare Eldredge  
*Academic Development Institute*

The Honorable Don Harmon  
*Illinois General Assembly*

Gwendolyn Kenner-Johnson  
*Illinois Department of Human Services – Office of Child Care & Family Services*

Kevin Limbeck  
*Family Focus*

Clara Lopez  
*El Valor*

Harriet Meyer (Co-Chair)  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Robin Miller  
*LUDA*

Sessy Nyman  
*Action for Children*

Sean Noble  
*Voices for Illinois Children*

Curtis Peace  
*Illinois School-Aged Child Care Network*

Guadalupe Preston  
*Catholic Charities of Chicago*  
Susan Raphael  
*Illinois Facilities Fund*

The Honorable Carol Ronen  
(Co-Chair)  
*Illinois General Assembly*

Diane Rutledge  
*Springfield Public School District*

Christine Ryan  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Steve Saunders  
*Illinois Department of Human Services – Office of Family Health*

Leo Smith  
*Birth to Five Political Action Committee*

Gregory Terry  
*Ada S. McKinley*

Paula Thoele  
*Savanna Community Unit District 300 (JA)*

Gertrude Washington  
*Consultant*

## **Evaluation & Assessment Committee**

Francesca Alcozer  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Pat Chamberlain  
*Elgin School District U-46*

Meredith Chambers  
*Chinese American Service League*

Michelle Causey-Drake  
*Jane Adams Hull House Association*

Jie-Qi Chen  
*Erikson Institute*

Deborah Daro  
*Chapin Hall Center for Children*

George Davis  
*City of Rockford Human Services Department*

Marsha Engquist  
*Lake Shore Schools*

Jan Fowler  
*Illinois Department of Human Services – Office of Family Health*

Karen Freel  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Rosalind Frye  
*Richard J. Daley College*

Barbara Grace  
*Murphysboro School District 186 (JA)*

Madeline Hanieh  
*Chicago Department of Children & Youth Services*

Theresa Hawley  
*Consultant*

Kay Henderson  
*Illinois State Board of Education – Early Childhood Education*

Richard Jones  
*Metropolitan Family Services*

Tom Layman  
*Chicago Metropolitan  
Association for the Education  
of Young Children*

Jane Garza Mancillas  
*El Hogar del Nino*

Samuel Meisels  
*Erikson Institute*

Kenya Merritt  
*Chicago Department of  
Children & Youth Services*

Alice Moss  
*DePaul University*

Diana Rauner  
*University of Chicago*

Gina Ruther  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services – Head Start State  
Collaboration Project*

Sara Slaughter  
*Chicago Metropolitan 2020*

Leo Smith  
*Birth to Five Political Action  
Committee*

Katie Williams  
*U.S. Department of Health &  
Human Services -  
Administration for Children  
and Families*

## **Quality Committee**

Robbie Anthony  
*Licensed Family Child Care  
Home Provider*

Brenda Arksey  
*Chinese American Service  
League*

Gayla Boomer  
*Illinois Congress of Parents  
and Teachers*

Cynthia Brunger  
*Department of Children &  
Family Services*

Micki Chulick  
*Community Coordinated Child  
Care*

Carol Delahoussaye  
*Consultant*

Brenda Eiland-Willford  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Clare Eldredge  
*Academic Development  
Institute*

Claudia Fabian  
*Latino Coalition for Prevention*

Kathy Fudge-White  
*Catholic Charities of Joliet*

Gaylord Gieseke  
*Voices for Illinois Children*

Lovie Griffin  
*Marillac Social Center*

Deborah Hampton  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Brent Harriman  
*Action for Children*

Kay Henderson  
*Illinois State Board of  
Education – Early Childhood  
Education*

Judy Johnson (Chair)  
*Rockford School District 205*

Marsha Johnson  
*Comprehensive Mental  
Health Center*

Sokoni Karanja  
*Center for New Horizons*

Laurie LeBreton  
*Parents United for  
Responsible Education*

Sue Markko  
*U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services -  
Administration for Children &  
Families*

Janice Moenster  
*Children's Home and Aid  
Society of Illinois*

Carolyn Newberry Schwartz  
*The Oak Park Collaboration  
for Early Childhood Care and  
Education*

Sureshrani Paintal  
*Chicago State University –  
Early Childhood Education*

Leticia Ramirez  
*El Valor*

Vanessa Rich  
*Chicago Department of  
Children and Youth Services*

Bonnie Roelle  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Edna Sanders  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Linda Saterfield  
*Illinois Department of Human  
Services*

Nancy Shier  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Sara Slaughter  
*Chicago Metropolitan 2020*

Luz Maria Solis  
*Chicago Public Schools*

Mark Valentine  
*Ounce of Prevention Fund*

Laurie Walker  
*Skip-A-Long Day Care*

Maureen Whalen  
*Germantown Hills School  
District # 69*

Mary Wonderlick  
*Chicago Public Schools  
(Retired)*

<b>APPENDIX B: ILLINOIS EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS</b>
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## January 2004

12 10:00 - 12:30, Illinois Early Learning Council

## February

5 1:00 – 3:00, Evaluation & Assessment Committee  
 9 1:00– 3:00, Workforce Committee  
 17 2:30 – 4:30, Expansion Committee  
 25 1:00 – 3:00, Linkage & Integration Committee

## March

1 10:00 - 12:00, Quality Committee  
 8 10:30 – 3:30, Workforce Committee  
 11 1:00 – 3:00, Evaluation & Assessment Committee  
 22 10:00-12:00, Quality Committee  
 29 10:00 – 12:00, Linkage & Integration Committee  
 29 1:00 – 3:00, Expansion Committee

## April

19 1:00 – 3:00, Illinois Early Learning Council  
 22 1:00 – 3:00, Evaluation & Assessment Committee

## May

3 10:00 - 12:00, Quality Committee  
 13 10:30 – 3:30, Workforce Committee  
 27 1:00 – 3:00, Evaluation & Assessment Committee

## June

7 10:00-12:00, Quality Committee  
 29 1:00-3:00, Executive Committee

## July

12 10:00-12:00, Quality Committee  
 19 10:30 – 12:30, Illinois Early Learning Council  
 19 1:00 – 3:00, Universality Options Workgroup, Expansion Committee  
 21 3:30 – 5:00, Inventory Workgroup, Expansion Committee

## August

3 10:00 - 12:00, 0-3 Workgroup, Quality Committee  
 3 10:30 - 2:30, Workforce Committee  
 5 10:00 - 11:30, Local Collaborations Workgroup, Linkage & Integration Committee  
 11 3:30 - 5:00, Inventory Workgroup, Expansion Committee  
 16 10:00 - 12:00, Quality Committee  
 20 1:00 - 2:30 pm, License-Exempt Workgroup, Linkage & Integration Committee

## **September**

- 13 1:15 - 5:00, 3-5 Teacher Qualifications Meeting
- 14 1:00 - 3:00, Program Requirements Workgroup, Linkage & Integration Committee
- 14 1:00 - 3:00, 0-3 Workgroup, Expansion Committee
- 15 9:00-10:30, Inventory Workgroup, Expansion Committee
- 15 10:30-12:30, Evaluation Committee Co-Chairs
- 20 10:00 - 1:00, Quality Committee
- 27 9:30 - 11:30, Linkage & Integration Committee

## **October**

- 1 1:00 - 2:30, License-Exempt Workgroup, Linkage & Integration Committee
- 4 10:00 - 1:00, Quality Committee
- 7 1:00 - 3:00, Evaluation & Assessment Committee
- 7 10:30 - 2:30, Workforce Development Committee & 3-5 Quality Workgroup
- 20 2:30 - 4:30, Executive Committee
- 25 10:00 - 1:00, Illinois Early Learning Council

## **November**

- 1 10:00 – 2:00, Quality & Workforce Joint Committee
- 22 10:00 – 12:00, Evaluation & Assessment Committee
- 22 3:00 – 5:00, Expansion Committee
- 29 10:00 – 12:00, Linkage & Integration Committee
- 29 2:00 – 4:00, Executive Committee

## **December**

- 6 9:00 - 12:00, Illinois Early Learning Council

## **January 2005**

- 20 10:30 – 2:30, Workforce Committee
- 31 10:00 – 1:00, Illinois Early Learning Council

## **Upcoming 2005 Early Learning Council Meetings**

- April 29 11:00 – 1:00 pm
- July 25 11:00 – 1:00 pm
- November 14 11:00 – 1:00 pm

## **APPENDIX C: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF QUALITY PRESCHOOL FOR ALL**

Every Illinois child should be safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time he or she enters school. High-quality early learning experiences have been proven to better prepare all children for success in school and later in life. Yet more than one-third of Illinois kindergartners are not considered ready to learn when they arrive at school. Developing a high-quality, voluntary, Preschool For All program will ensure that all children have access to high-quality early learning experiences before they enter kindergarten.

The Illinois Early Learning Council's charge includes expanding access to high-quality preschool for all children three to five years of age in Illinois, beginning with those children most at-risk for school failure, and expanding access to high-quality early learning programs for all at-risk infants and toddlers.

As a result of past planning efforts and discussions at the Illinois Early Learning Council and other tables, many agreements have already been reached about the essential elements of a program of quality Preschool For All and can be incorporated into further planning in Illinois. The elements below are a work in progress and will be expanded further as the Early Learning Council continues its work and further delineates the comprehensive set of elements for Illinois' Preschool For All program.

### **Two-year preschool program**

Serve 3- and 4-year-olds, as research shows that two year programs are more effective.

### **Serve children at-risk first**

Begin with children at-risk of school failure within a community and/or communities with high proportions of children at-risk. Give programs the flexibility to define at-risk categories that are appropriate to the needs of the families and children in their community, as well as in the methods used for determining at-risk status. Children at-risk for school failure may include, but is not limited to: children in families with Department of Children and Family Services involvement; children with a disability or a developmental delay; non-English speaking children; and children eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program and/or the Child Care Assistance Program. Serve up to 10% of children who do not meet risk criteria in order to begin serving the children of working parents who are unable to afford high-quality preschool education.

### **Well-designed curriculum**

Adopt research-based, culturally-sensitive curricula that address the five domains of development (health and physical development, social and emotional development, language development, cognition and general knowledge, and approaches to learning); align with Illinois Early Learning Standards and Head Start Performance Standards; and include experiences that incorporate the varied backgrounds, needs, and interests of each child.

### **Highly-qualified teachers and staff**

Require lead teachers in preschool classrooms to have a four-year college degree and specialized training in early childhood education. Require program administrators, family resource coordinators, and assistant teachers to meet educational qualifications that increase the effectiveness of preschool programs.

### **Ongoing assessment**

Use child assessment and program evaluation systems that support individual children's learning and development and programs' continuous improvement.

**Family involvement**

Provide educational, involvement, and support opportunities for parents, guardians, and other family members or caregivers of participating children.

**Effective transitions**

Ensure successful transitions for children from home or child care to preschool, birth-to-three services to preschool, and from preschool, which will be delivered in a variety of settings, to elementary school.

**Build on existing programs**

Build upon and enhance existing local programs, including child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, PreKindergarten, and Early Childhood Special Education, to increase quality and capacity of existing early learning programs and to expand access to reach additional children.

**Delivered in variety of settings**

Deliver a preschool program in half-day, school-day, and/or full-day formats or settings, as well as school-year and year-round schedules, depending on community need and resources and where parents reside.

**Funding available to community-based agencies as well as schools**

Allow direct access to funding to a wide variety of organizations that are capable of providing early childhood services, including child care centers and licensed child care homes, Head Start sites, nursery schools, etc. Build on existing resources through blending of new funds with existing program funds.

**Expansion of resources**

Increase resources to improve and expand early childhood programs throughout the state. These new dollars are not to supplant resources currently supporting the existing early childhood care and education system.

**Funding level**

Allocate funding necessary to achieve quality for eligible programs based on additional costs associated with upgrading existing services to meet new standards (e.g., adding B.A.-level teachers, family resource coordinators, etc.) and for serving higher-need families or communities. Structure the program to allow for reasonable flexibility in resource allocation.

**Infrastructure costs**

Provide funds for infrastructure supports, such as training and technical assistance; monitoring for quality assurance; evaluation; professional development (e.g. TEACH scholarships); mental health consultation; information technology; and transportation.

**Funding for families with infants and toddlers**

Incorporate funding for 0-3 programs as a set-aside of the preschool funding stream, similar to the current Early Childhood Education Block Grant and Head Start/Early Head Start.

**Program identity**

Brand the preschool program to identify local programs meeting the specified state standards.

**Comprehensive 0-5 early learning system**

Ensure high quality preschool is part of a broader 0-5 early learning system by eliminating regulatory barriers among programs, providing smooth transitions for children from home and 0-3 services and to K-12, and linking children and families with appropriate services and resources available in the community.